Sandie Hendrix — 'overweight' at 127

Heavy, Heavy, What Flies Friendly Skies?

By MICHAEL SEILER
Special to The Sunday Press And the Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — It was a little man named Rick Nadeau who brought about her undoing, says Sandie Hendrix. "A very short squatty man," is how Ms. Hendrix describes him now.

The problem with Nadeau, a flight attendant supervisor, was that he was lacking in charity, Ms. Hendrix says. Also, he had a faulty understanding of her feminine physiology.

He couldn't grasp the fact that at certain times of the month, she gained a few pounds temporarily. Neither could he sympathize with girls from large Italian families who, at infrequent intervals, experience the urge for just one slice of pizza.

In short, Nadeau was one of those men who give male chauvinism a bad name.

He was also the man who booted Sandie Hendrix out of her job as a stewardess with United Air Lines.

In fairness to Nadeau it should be said that he was only following the rules. The rules at United say that a stewardess who is 5-foot-2, cannot weigh more than 118 pounds.

Nadeau said from Chicago headquarters the other day that he sees the situation differently than Ms. Hendrix. He says he talked to Ms. Hendrix about her weight no more than a half-dozen times during her probationary period. One conversation followed a complaint by a passenger that Ms. Hendrix was obviously overweight.

Nadeau says he understands periodic weight gain, but her extra poundage had to come from other factors.

Finally, he thinks he treated her fairly and wishes she would return the favor. "I'm 6 feet tall, weigh about 200 pounds and I wouldn't consider myself squat."

In fairness to United, it should be said that the friendly skies guys make the rules so they can be "competitive in the marketplace," in the words of a United spokesman.

In fairness to Ms. Hendrix, it should be said that she carries her weight very well, indeed, and that an extra pound or two here or there would hardly get in the way of her fluffing up a pillow or fetching another shot of scotch.

But rules are rules, as Ms. Hendrix found out last year when United canned her for weighing in at 127.

Help may be on the way for Ms. Hendrix and other weight-watching stews. The Airline Pilots Assn., which represents some flight attendants, male and female, is suing United in U.S. District Court in New York, seeking to overturn United's weight limits.

The suit, says an association spokesman, claims that "flight attendants are legally required aboard an aircraft for one reason — the safety of the passengers. If a flight attendant doesn't live up to an airlines' weight standards, it has nothing to do with her ability to save lives."

The Airline Pilots Assn. figures the case against United could be a milestone of sorts. If United, the nation's largest carrier, loses, then the others may drop their weight limits.

If that happens, then the strict weight requirement will be the third major stewardess rule that has fallen by the wayside in recent years. It used to be an airline would fire a stewardess who married or grew 40ish, but not anymore.

Just a few years ago, the average stewardess worked her job only for a year or two, according to the spokesman; now the average length of service is 5½ years and still climbing.

The one hurdle left for career-minded stewardesses is the weight rule.

Asked for the reasoning behind the weight limits, a United spokesman replied:

"It's a competitive job to get. It's an attractive line of work. We have so many applications that we only take about 1 in 30 . . , we're going to take the brightest, the people with empathy and enthusiasm, the people who want to serve."

Ms. Hendrix is good buddies with a dozen United stews based in Los Angeles and she says they're weighed every month and most of them fight the battle of the scales as best they can.

She's working as a receptionist with the Southern California Gas Co. and likes that job, but still her heart is in the middle aisle of a 747.

"I'm not bitter; I was hurt more than anything because I was judged on something physical that had nothing to do with performance. It was a bad experience with one bad supervisor, that's all," she says.

She is hoping the New York suit against United will get her the stewardess wings back, along with lost pay and seniority.

In the meantime she is being very good. "I haven't seen a French fry or baked potato in months."

Electronic Challenge

Phone Phreaks Bilking Ma Bell

By SIMON WINCHESTER
Special To The Sunday Press And The Manchester Guardian

NEW YORK — The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution declares resolutely that "Congress shall make no law . . .abridging the freedom of speech . . ."

But according to the rate schedule issued by the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Co., it now costs me $1.35 to speak for three minutes to someone in San Francisco from my telephone in Maryland. And that is not free speech.

Not in the view of the Technological American Party, that is. This thousand-strong group, which held its second annual convention in a scruffy New York hotel this month, believes that America, which undoubtedly has one of the best telephone systems in the world, should also have the free-est system.

Accordingly, for the past 2½ years the youthful technocrats who make up the membership of TAP have been issuing reams and reams of information on how best to defraud, fiddle, steal from, or generally rip off the American telephone system. Since they have the constitution behind them, they reason, it's all good, clean fun, in the public interest and morally sound.

OTHER WAYS

"Phone phreaking," as the practice of ripping off the phone company is inelegantly known, began here about five years ago when two bright young students named John Draper and Joe Engressia discovered there were more ways of speaking to the corner store than dropping a dime in the slot.

John Draper came to be known in phreaking circles as "Captain Crunch" when he discovered that the frequency of a signal needed to give him access to idle trunk telephone lines, and thus the potential to make free calls across the globe, was the same frequency as that emitted by a small plastic whistle supplied free with every packet of some sugar-frosted breakfast cereal.

Blind Joe Engressia had no such serendipity: He had, instead, a superb mind for international dialing codes and operator commands and switching procedures, and over the months became an expert in winning free telephone calls from Moscow to Madagascar from his home telephone in Memphis.

JUST FOR FUN

"All I have done (and what Joe has done cost him a hefty fine and a threatened five years' term in a federal penetentiary) has been purely for the fun of it — I have never really wanted to defraud the system. Some day I guess I'd like to work for Bell, if they'd ever have me . . ." And his voice trails away over the circuits, while he hopes that some telephone tapster is listening out there for his appeals for work, and warming to his secret love affair with old Ma Bell.

To defraud Ma Bell, whom TAP identifies as Public Enemy No. 1, the phreaks have devised any number of clever, not so clever and totally bizarre ways of getting around the system. They were explained at the convention, which was held in an upstairs room at a hotel off Times Square.

REVENGE METHOD

Al Bell said it was the company's way of getting their revenge for what they had realized must have been a free call. (To me it seemed so bad I thought for a moment I was back in Britain.)

The simplest way of getting a free call from a coin box is when the operator asks you to put in money. Coins register at the exchange — in the older boxes — by making a "ding" for a nickel, a "ding ding" for a dime and "dong" for a quarter.

What you do to beat the system is to put all your coins, when the operator asks you, in the phone box next to you, making sure that you hold the mouthpiece of your phone up against the coin box of the other. You drop in your coins, make the dings and the dongs and the ding-dings, the Bell lady says that's fine and connects you. You have your talk and hang up; and then you press the coin return button on your neighboring phone — and hey presto, all your money will come back, and you've made a free call.

BLEEPS, BLURPS

Dings and dongs are out, it seems, in the interests of security. Bleeps and blurps of electronic origin are in.

But electronic noises can be simulated, as the moog synthesizer has demonstrated. The Red Box is a little moog synthesizer which accurately duplicates the sound of the coins going into the boxes; all a caller has to do is to order his call through the operator, put the speaker end of his Red Box up against the mouthpiece of his phone, and the operator will connect him — for nought.

Curcuit plans for the Red Boxes were selling like hot cakes at the convention. The Bell system fears that it could lose $100 million or more this year in fraudulent calls made with Red Boxes.

But these methods, and many, many more of similar kinds are horribly crude in the eyes and the ears of the devotees of the sicence. It is the Blue Box and its weakling brother, the Black Box, which remain the Hope Diamonds of the craft, and the language that surrounds their use remains poetry to the true phreaks like Joe Engressia, John Draper and the other old phreaking granddaddies in the TAP.

The Blue Box is basically a system of electronic oscillators that emit precise double tones that exactly simulate the tones used to activate the worldwide telephone switching systems. To use one is simplicity itself; to explain just what they do, however, requires a little explanation of the method of trunk line switching and accounting.

Let us say you are in Los Angeles and want to dial a call to New York City. First, the pulses from your dialing go to your local central office exchange, where the activator device calls the CAMA, the Centralized Automatic Message Accountant. This machine records your number, the date and the time, and the number you have just dialed; it then relays all the information pulses onto something called a "toll sender" which swings your call on to a free transcontinental telephone trunk line.

Once the toll sender has found a free line it sends a series of multifrequency pulses (or MF pulses) — the same double pulses which a Blue Box is designed to generate — across to something called "incoming sender" in the toll office in New York. The toll office receives the call, sends it down to the central office exchange identified by the three first digits of the number; the CO sends it farther, to the telephone you're calling, by identifying the last four numbers. And then, once the distant phone is picked up, a signal goes all the way back to the incoming sender to the toll sender to the Californian CO and to the CAMA machine, which notes that the call has begun, and activates the charging mechanism.

CONTINUOUS PULSE

The important thing that Draper and Engressia discovered is that when a trunk telephone line is idle — that is, not carrying any messages — it carries a continuous pulse of a pure 2,600 cycles per second, to identify it to any sender hunting for a free trunk line. As soon as a sender sees there's a line, the 2,600 cycles disappear to make way for the MF pulses transmitted for the call.

What a phone phreak does is to dial into the trunk system by getting long distance information in New York City — which, from a phone in California, requires the dialing of 212-555-1212. Now, as soon as the number connects, he punches his 2,600 button on his Blue Box and this makes the New York City incoming sender think that the line should be disconnected. And it does disconnect it.

The caller is then on—to that delight of all phone phreaks — an unused trunk line, which is just waiting around to be seized for a long distance call. With his Blue Box in his hand and the free line coming straight into his phone, he is the only person in the world who can seize it — and it can take him anywhere he wants.

If he is connected on the trunk — or the tandem, as it is sometimes known — to New York City, and he wants to talk to someone in New York, then he just punches this number on his Blue Box. If he wants somewhere in, say, Hawaii, he just punches the Hawaii code (808) and then the number and the incoming sender will kindly reconnect him. If he wants London, he punches the number of the White Plains International Switching Center (182), then the London pulses (011441), and he's into England.

TOTALLY FREE

All the while his little CAMA machine back in the CO in Los Angeles is notching up his charges at precisely the rate that the Bell system requires for calling New York information — no cents per minute. In other words, totally free.

Tripping up onto a tandem, stacking trunks, zapping around the country from New York to Anchorage to Honolulu and back just to get a store on your street corner — all this kind of thing is pure delight to the true phone phreak. The 100 or so masked individuals who gathered in the Times Square hotel last week were many steps removed from the romantic vision of phreaking — they were into the trade purely and simply to defraud a company that they feel makes too much money.

Their stand may be morally more sound, but their art is decaying, from the great days of the early '70s when Captain Crunch was at the peak of his career. Filling up coin boxes with glue, dropping brass washers into coinbox slots, running powerful electromagnets over the boxes to ruin them forever, now seem to be the height of the abilities of many of the TAP phreaks.

As blind Joe Engressia said ruefully on the phone from Memphis, "That's not poetry any longer, that's just cheating."

Living Cheap

Here's Some Sound Advice

By MARTIN PORISS

Music may soothe the savage beast — but the price of a good sound system can make you go ape

Here's how to put together a smooth-sounding system at a soothing price:

First, decide what you actually need. Beyond a certain price level, you pay a lot for slight differences in sound. Figure your finances, the amount of volume you can really use without "horning in" on your neighbors, and the amount you want to spend on each facet of your sound system (speakers, amplifier, etc.)

Buying from established dealers is O.K. You may pay top dollar, but you will probably receive better warranty service and get a "loaner" if your purchase poops out.

For the economy minded, the discount houses listed in stereo magazines may provide lower prices. Just remember, if a little-known foreign model breaks, it may have to go back to a Tibetan monastery to be fixed by the head lama. So choose a recognized brand with outlets in this country, and try to listen to a system of the type you choose before you buy.

For cheapskates (like me), here are some tips on getting "top volume" for bottom dollar:

—Check college bulletin boards. Students are often on Easy Street at the beginning of a term, but find themselves living in penury (a suburb of East Poverty) near the end. Come final-exam time, great sound equipment may be bought for a song, sometimes even while still under warranty!

—Buy used equipment: In sound equipment models and gadgets change rapidly. Many excellent rigs, now considered obsolete, have been traded in or are lying around the house. An "expert" might sneer at a 10-year-old tube amplifier — but tubes are easily checked for defects, are easy to replace and cost much less than transistors to replace. Run an ad in the paper — it may get re-sounding results. There are also legions of superb monaural sets stashed in attics; maybe you can just offer to haul one away (replace the old needle with a stereo needle, though, to avoid record damage) and ask local dealers about trade-in bargains. You get to hear the system before buying, and you should get (ask for it!) at least a 90-day warranty.

Consider buying second-hand speakers. You needn't be a pro to determine if a used speaker is in top shape. If it sounds good, it works fine. The wood casing may have a scratch or two, but that old speaker will sound no sour note in your bank balance. Invest the savings in a good set of stereo earphones: They are quiet (your neighbor won't blow a fuse), you get great separation of channels and they are comfortable on the (h)ears.

—Don't buy gadgets. Sure, a record-changer is nice. But a straight turntable (tone arm is placed on record by hand) has fewer parts to break, does as good a job as an automatic changer, and is easier on the records. They are sometimes available used for less than $40.

—Build your own. Kits, if you know what you're doing, can provide cheap but good sound.

And finally, a good sound system is useless if the records have nore scratches than Aqueduct. Don't mount a brush on the tone arm; use a dust bug and mount it on the turntable. And discard those hard, scratchy, paper record jackets and invest in some cheap, and soft plastic jackets. Your records will last much longer.

Remember: No matter what the statistics say, the only way to judge a sound system is by listening to it. So listen to an expensive new rig and a low-cost used one. If you can't hear the difference — buy Cheap but Good.

*But Good

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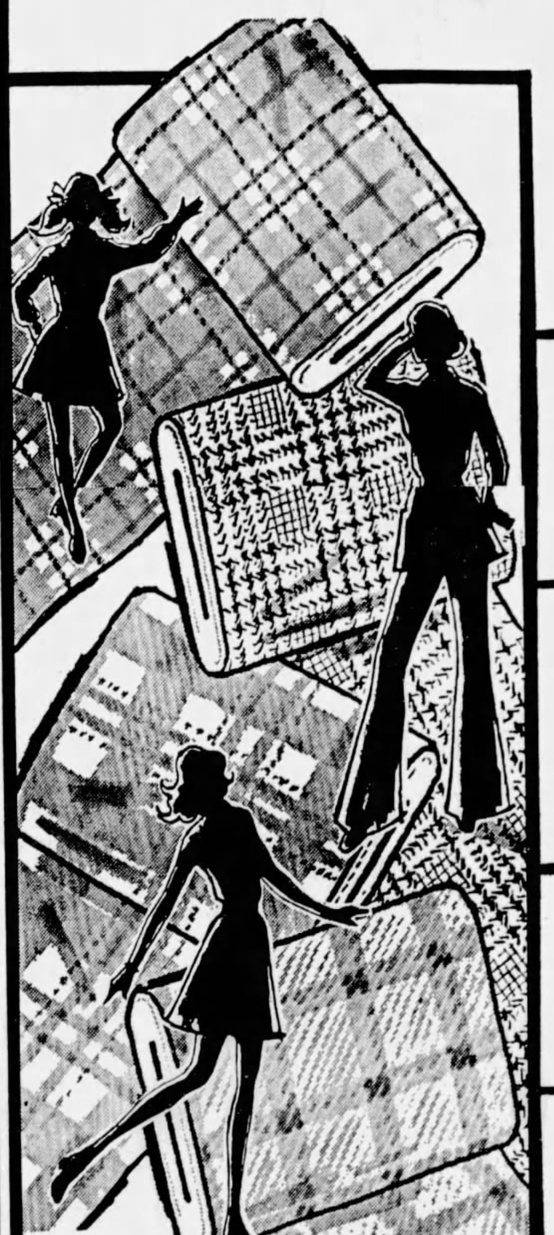

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